Against Reason: Anti/Enlightenment Prints
by Callot, Hogarth, Piranesi, and Goya

Curated by
students in the Exhibition Seminar,
Department of Art and Art History, Grinnell College
Under the Direction of Assistant Professor of Art History, J. Vanessa Lyon

April 3 — August 2, 2015

Faulconer Gallery
Bucksbaum Center for the Arts
Grinnell College

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Maria Shevelkina ’15
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Published on the occasion of the exhibition

*Against Reason: Anti/Enlightenment Prints by Callot, Hogarth, Piranesi, and Goya*

3 April–2 August 2015

**Lender to the Exhibition:**
University of Iowa Museum of Art
Iowa City, Iowa

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The catalogue’s cover images are reproductions of the embossed leather bindings of a 1584 edition of Martin de Azpilcueta’s *Enchiridion* (BV194.C7A91x). This canonical manual of Catholic casuistry is housed in Grinnell College’s Special Collections and Archives.

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A Word on the Colors:

Echoing Enlightenment discourse, *Against Reason* places printmakers Jacques Callot, William Hogarth, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, and Francisco de Goya y Lucientes in conversation across national and temporal boundaries. Seen in this way, their printed works trouble a monolithic conception of the Enlightenment as an age of pure progress predicated on science and tolerance. Just as these four artists negotiated the strictures and possibilities of the Age of Reason, we continue the process today.

To further enact the dialogue, we have chosen to highlight four specific themes that encapsulate or complicate major Enlightenment concerns. Broader contexts of Nationalism (blue), Order (orange), Aesthetics (green) and Religion (red) are signaled through the colored mats framing each print and their duplication in this catalogue. The historically appropriate palette was chosen based on surprisingly vivid and varied paint colors in 18th-century domestic interiors by Robert Adam and his contemporaries.

Our admittedly disorderly chromatic taxonomy is offered as a ‘color itinerary.’ We invite you to move through the exhibition in whatever irrational manner you choose! But you are also encouraged to link the works through their mat colors. Following this approach, viewers might discover unexpected connections between the images, whether formal or conceptual, historical or technical. While we realize moving unsystematically from wall to wall may go ‘against reason,’ we hope it will produce a new sense of the inter-pictorial and thematic ways in which these remarkable artists speak to, and through, each other to Faulconer visitors today.

–The Curators

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Preface

Seven student curators joined Assistant Professor of Art History, J. Vanessa Lyon for the exhibition seminar of Fall 2014. What began as a rigorous and enjoyable process of art historical study, writing, and collegial close-looking at some of the most compelling 17th through 19th-century etchings and engravings in the distinguished collection of Grinnell College, culminated in an exhibition designed to investigate the varied, often counter-intuitive, print culture of the Enlightenment era. Our core selections range from lesser-known prints by Hogarth and Piranesi, to signature images by Callot and Goya. Students were responsible for all curatorial aspects of this exhibition, from designing the gallery ‘hang’ to composing catalogue entries and wall texts. The exhibition’s range and quality were enhanced by loans from the University of Iowa Museum of Art through their Legacies for Iowa Collections Sharing Project. We find it fitting that this lending initiative, generously supported by the Matthew Bucksbaum family, will bring works from the UIMA to Grinnell College’s Bucksbaum Center for the Arts, home of the Faulconer Gallery.
Acknowledgements

The curators warmly thank the following people, without whom this exhibition would not be possible:

Kay Wilson, Curator of Prints and Drawings, Grinnell College, for her expert knowledge, generous advice, and invaluable oversight of the collection; Professor of Art, Matthew Kluber, for an illuminating introduction to printmaking techniques; Professor Jenny Anger, Assistant Professor Marika Knowles, and the members of the Department of Art and Art History, for their support.

We are grateful as well to the staff of the Faulconer Gallery and especially, to the incomparable Milton Severe, Director of Exhibition Design, who alternately entertained and tempered our wild ideas with his usual humor and professionalism. Tilly Woodward, Curator of Academic and Community Outreach, helped us consider the various ways in which our exhibition might engage visitors. Lesley Wright, Director of the Faulconer Gallery, offered us savvy guidance and practical advice at every turn. The catalogue benefited immensely from her eagle-eye. We also appreciate the assistance of Associate Director, Dan Strong and Conni Gause, Administrative Support Assistant.

In Grinnell College’s Office of Communication, further thanks go to Jim Powers, Director, for his longtime support. We are especially grateful to the talented Larissa Stalcup, graphic designer, for transforming our inchoate notions of an Enlightenment-style museum catalogue into a publication of this quality.

Beyond the College, we were fortunate indeed to find a generous lending partner in the University of Iowa Museum of Art. UIMA’s Sarika Sugla, Assistant Curator of the Legacies for Iowa Collections Sharing Project, was with us from the beginning and introduced us ‘in person’ to the University’s excellent collection of works on paper. We at Grinnell College also appreciate the continuing support of UIMA’s Chief Curator, Kathleen A. Edwards. Thanks, too, to Heather V. Vermeulen for an elucidating discussion of 18th century imagery of Atlantic slavery and ecology. Assistant Professor Christopher R. Jones, Special Collections Librarian and Archivist of the College, led us to the beautiful binding used for this catalogue’s cover.

Finally, the student curators of the exhibition seminar extend their deepest thanks to their families, friends, and Grinnell College professors—and this professor extends her heartfelt appreciation to Elizabeth, Tim, Mai, Maria, Dana, Hannah, and Emma for their big ideas, hard work, sparkling wit, and unflagging dedication at every stage of this truly collaborative art historical endeavor.

– J. Vanessa Lyon
Introduction

‘Je suis Callot’:
What Only Art Can Do

“What Reason weaves, by Passion is undone.”
—Alexander Pope, Essay on Man and Other Poems (1732-34)

We can trace the origins of European Enlightenment thought to René Descartes’ (1596-1650) Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One’s Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences, first published in 1637. Here, the French philosopher famously contends: Je pense, donc je suis (I think, therefore I am).1 Descartes’ unflagging quest for certainty, distrust of the senses, and determined privileging of mind over body inspired many Enlightenment authors and scientists. Yet for the French philosopher’s artist contemporary, Jacques Callot (1592/3-1635), it was bodies—and the feelings aroused by depictions of their use and abuse—that mattered most. Through his virtuosic rendering of theatrical gestures, telling physiognomies, and dynamic, almost animate, clothing, Callot employed the human figure to create what Donald Posner describes as “empathetic responses in the spectator.”2

Callot was born in Nancy, in the then-independent Duchy of Lorraine (today’s France). Like Descartes, who was trained by the Jesuits, he received a demanding Catholic education. Much of Callot’s life was touched by religious and political strife, in particular the Thirty Years’ War that raged in Europe from 1618 to 1648. The prints by Callot included in this exhibition are drawn from his celebrated series, the eighteen-part, Les Misères et les malheurs de la guerre. The Miseries of War, as these small-scale prints are known, was published in 1633, four years before Descartes’ Discourse.

Callot’s lively, bravura draftsmanship may seem at odds with rigid Cartesian method. Yet for some viewers his detailed architecture and diminutive, choreographed figures anticipate a kind of journalistic truth-telling. Callot’s Miseries are thus widely seen as both “bitter social commentaries” and accurately descriptive accounts of the dreadful conflicts of his age. Praised for his condemnation of the “religious zeal that has fueled the violence” of war, the Baroque artist is accordingly presented as a proto-secularist with a healthy disdain for the Catholic Church verging on anti-clericalism.3

Callot and his Miseries are interpreted differently here. In her provocative and original reading of Callot’s Catholicism, for example, Mai Pham deploys historical and formal analysis to suggest that the (evidently Franciscan) friars who populate many of the Miseries can be understood as benevolent forces of forgiveness rather than mere stand-ins for a feeble and corrupt religious institution. This characterization would be especially intriguing if Callot’s rogue soldiers are meant to represent enemy French Protestant Huguenots. Elizabeth Allen takes on another knee-jerk response to Callot’s graphic violence. Confronting assertions of the artist’s unstinting realism, Allen provides examples of his intention to ‘aestheticize,’ or make visually attractive, even the most potentially gory and horrifying scenes. The viciousness and destruction portrayed in these prints, she claims, should not prevent us from noticing Callot’s canny appeals to Renaissance art and his desire to combine narrative terror and visual pleasure.

Born a little more than a century after Callot, William Hogarth (1697–1764), the maverick British painter, printmaker, and art writer, is more familiar to many graphic arts enthusiasts than his prolific predecessor from Lorraine. Yet Callot’s fluid, detailed etching style and efficiently elegant handling of line were influential on the young Hogarth, who often copied his prints. The British artist knew the Miseries well and had also studied Callot’s massive multipart wartime treatment of the Siege of La Rochelle (1628). However much he protested the invasion of his homeland by presumably fussy and affected French taste, Hogarth quite successfully, if disingenuously, translated the decorative French rococo into a hardier English vernacular. As Dana Sly demonstrates in her compelling analyses of Hogarth’s 1738 print series, The Times of the Day (an edition dating from Hogarth’s “lifetime” newly acquired by Grinnell College and shown here for the first time), Hogarth draws on ‘Frenchness’ even as he critiques it in the name of British nationalism. Sly also identifies formal citations of Callot in the theatrical setting of Hogarth’s last of the Four Stages of Cruelty (1751). Elsewhere in this proto-Gothic cautionary tale, Hogarth’s heartrending imagery shows that the torture of animals—creatures believed by Descartes to lack souls, and therefore feelings—rapidly escalates to cruelty to people, for which the villainous English Nero is justly sent to his tomb.

The bizarre and idiosyncratic architectural visions of Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778) may seem far removed from the meaty moral fare of Hogarth’s London. Here again, however, formal consonances are appreciable in the works of these ostensibly antithetical artists. Take, for example, the imposing triumphal arch in Hogarth’s Gate of Calais (1748), a compositional and rhetorical framing device that will reappear continuously in Piranesi’s views as a pictorial ode to Roman solidity and engineering.

Emma Vale considers Piranesi’s oblique view of one of Rome’s most recognizable triumphal monuments, the tripartite Arch of Constantine (315 C.E.). Here, she argues, the artist’s skewed perspective confounds rather than clarifies our notion of the façade and its famously grafted-on sculptural fragments in a decidedly anti-Enlightenment manner. If Piranesi’s tumbledown ‘modern’ shack disallows a timeless view of an ancient arch, it is a strategy to which he will return in the prints known as Grotteschi. As Vale explains, in these exuberantly ornamental etchings, Piranesi “represents the decay of various examples of ancient Greek culture, which fall victim to time itself.”

As recent scholarship has shown, some of Piranesi’s most intricate and seemingly precise architectural views play fast and loose with the structural ‘truth’ of the buildings depicted. 4 Further broadening our notion of the architect’s aesthetics, Tim McCall illuminates the Venice-born Piranesi’s ambivalent antiquarian fact-finding. McCall situates the prints in a cosmopolitan Enlightenment context where, true to the growing historical interest in national origins, the relative cultural merits of ancient Greece and antique Rome found fervent support in France and Italy, respectively. Turning our attention to the ways in which the “imaginative collides with the archeological,” McCall describes Piranesi’s combination of multiple printmaking techniques and sublimely subliminal imagery to complicate the boundaries between scientific observation and artistic license.

Few familiar with the darkly whimsical and damning 1777 Caprichos (Caprices) of Francisco de Goya (1748–1828) will be surprised to find the Spanish painter and printmaker similarly blurring art and life with a moral message in mind. Goya’s sixty-five etchings called the Desastres de la Guerra (Disasters of War) were undoubtedly inspired by Callot’s Miseries. Like the Miseries, Goya’s vehemently anti-war Disasters reveal astonishingly little about the precise political and confessional allegiances of their maker. However nightmarishly surreal their imagery, Goya’s Disasters relate indisputably to the actual events through which he lived during the Napoleonic invasion of Spain in the Peninsular War of 1808–1814.

Like Callot’s Miseries, Goya’s Disasters can be understood as both a particular history and a universal allegory. It follows perhaps, as a close reading of Hannah Storch’s entries will show, that Goya’s political and philosophical views can vary in the portrayal of similar subjects and from print to print in the same series. In the Disasters, Storch argues, the figure of the noblewoman may stand for Spain’s vulnerability to the French soldiers who devastated Spanish forces and raped and pillaged in Spanish towns. While in (certain of) the Caprices, by contrast, noblewomen may represent ignorance, idleness, and foolish resistance to the Enlightenment’s promised freedom from outmoded ideas.

Maria Shevelkina’s careful formal analysis and willingness to examine the Spanish artist’s ‘duality’ shed additional light on Goya’s pro, counter, and anti-Enlightenment visual rhetoric. As Shevelkina writes of Goya’s ghastly dismembered bodies: “Men are left, the last of their dignity stripped, decaying in and along with nature: the only fruit of these trees is the dead man, the violence of human nature.” This un/natural wartime produce brings us back, full circle, from Callot’s Hanging Tree. As Shevelkina’s interpretation further suggests, Goya—surely among the most humane of all artist-social critics—was a

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humanist in some but not all senses. If ‘man’ is the only animal endowed with reason, he seems to say, precious little good it has done us.

***

This Introduction’s title, ‘Je suis Callot,’ alludes, of course, to the recent acts of terrorism in Paris, where twelve people (ten staff and two police officers) were killed in and around the office of the French weekly, *Charlie Hebdo*. The magazine was evidently targeted for its history of publishing unabashedly offensive cartoons described by an American journalist as “anti-authoritarian, anti-religious, and anti-institutional.” That the French cartoonists were, to varying degrees, following in the footsteps of Callot, Hogarth, Piranesi, and Goya seems obvious. It is equally apparent that without Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment ideals such as the liberation of presses and markets from governmental control, radical, button-pushing, counter-cultural publications such as *Charlie Hebdo* could not exist.

In the aftermath of the French tragedy, ‘free speech’ became the rallying cry. But the enduring political value of ‘free images’ was also at stake. As these four artists remind us, wars of all kinds—civil, religious, cultural—have been fought for, with, and against pictures. While some prints in this exhibition appeal to written texts and many invoke historical events or philosophical notions, they refer just as often to sophisticated aesthetic strategies and enduring artistic traditions. Anything but mere illustrations or objective accounts of the people, places, and ideas represented, they rely, in other words, on the knowledge of visual culture. We invite you therefore to approach and enjoy these works on their own terms, as primary sources for the study of the Enlightenment. We also encourage you, if moved, to go against the reasonableness of chronology and progress in order to discover connections within and between the prints in a manner their creators would not only have appreciated but may well have intended from the start.

— J. Vanessa Lyon

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5 The expression “Je suis Charlie,” (I, ‘too,’ am *Charlie*) was coined as a show of solidarity for the French.

Jacques Callot
(1592-1635)
1.1 Jacques Callot (French, c. 1592–1635), Enrollment of the Troops (L’Enrôlement des Troupes), pl. 2 from Les Grandes Misères de la Guerre, 1633, etching.

[Ce Metal que Pluton dans ses veines enferre, Qui faict en mefme temps, et la paix, et la guerre, Attire le foldat, fans creinte des dangers, Du lieu de fa naissance, aux Pais efrangers Ou s’eſtant embarqué pour fuivre la Milice Il faut que fa vertu f’arme contre le vice.]

[That metal which Pluto encloses within his veins, which at the same time causes peace and war, draws the soldier, without fear of danger, from the place of his birth to foreign lands, where, having embarked to follow the military, his virtue must arm itself against vice.]

1 Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Callot’s captions are found in Jacques Callot: Prints & Related Drawings (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 1975).
Enrollment of the Troops

In diaries discovered after his death, Jacques Callot refers to the series now known as *Les Grandes Misères de la Guerre* as, rather simply, *la vie du soldat*: the life of a soldier (Choné 1992). Art historians debate whether Callot intended his series to represent the contemporaneous Thirty Years’ War, which erupted in 1618, or as a more general portrayal of war regardless of time or place (Hornstein 2005). Regardless of the answer, in the first print of the series Callot depicts the enlistment of civilians, the moment when soldiers are created.

The artist composed a wide-angled scene. Beginning at left, a throng of men gathers around a table to enlist in the army. A commander points them in the direction of the meticulously ordered battalions, where they will find their place. Callot renders each soldier posed in synchronized perfection, his pike ruler-straight, piercing the sky like a neat pinprick. There is a clear hierarchy between the commanders and the soldiers in their “disciplined formation” at rapt attention to their superiors (Hornstein 2005). Beneath a tree at right, more officers stand around a table, strategizing for future battles. Shrouded menacingly by the shade of the outstretched boughs, two watch silently from behind, weapons in hand. The orderliness and overall readability of the scene provide little indication of the impending horrors Callot will show. Though soldiers now proudly stand tall, we will soon see their complete physical and moral deterioration.

Grinnell’s unique collection of the *Misères* features printed ornamental frames inscribed with the Latin “FRUCTUS BELLi,” which translates as “The Fruits of War.” Each decorative frame has three formerly blank spaces—at right, left, and beneath the print—which allow for individual customization by carefully pasting in another small Callot etching as the owner pleased. An array of Callot’s wonderfully intricate and miniscule etchings would have been printed specifically for this purpose. This ornamental reframing demonstrates that the *Misères* were considered ideal for aestheticization by 18th and 19th-century collectors despite their dark and often horrifying subject matter.

– EJA
The Inspection

In his narrative series, *Marriage A-la-Mode*, based on Samuel Richardson's 1740 novel *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, Hogarth inverts a tale of steadfast virtue. He chronicles the doomed marriage of a viscount and a wealthy merchant's daughter as they steadily descend into greed, vanity, and adultery culminating in the lady's death in the final plate (Paulson 1993). As was his frequent commercial practice, the prints in the series were reversed replicas of larger, corresponding paintings. Hogarth later advertised and sold the prints at a lower price.

In *The Inspection*, the third of six plates in the series, the viscount visits an apothecary without his wife to discuss his contraction of venereal disease, presumably from extramarital sex. The viscount brandishes a pillbox as he haggles over the treatment with the apothecary. His exposed neck wears a large, black patch. In Hogarth's time, patches were used both to cover syphilis scars and as cosmetic beauty spots (Rosenthal 2001). The dual associations of the accessory label him as both vain and sexually diseased. The viscount carelessly waves his walking stick as one might a sword. To his right, a young prostitute dabs at a syphilitic sore.

The apothecary, Dr. Rock, was a living, contemporary figure known for syphilis treatments. A favorite villain of Hogarth's, Rock is also illustrated in *The Four Times of Day* (Foster 1944). In *The Inspection*, Hogarth mocks the quack doctor's ineffectiveness as a man of science by surrounding him with taxonomical disorder.

Rock's office is thus portrayed as an old-fashioned wunderkammer. Wunderkammern, or cabinets of curiosities, were collections of specimens intended for marvel and study. Popular amongst Enlightenment intellectuals, the collections functioned as private, early museums (Lauder 2011). In *The Inspection*, a lascivious skeleton embraces and gropes an anatomical model who peers through a cabinet. The walls and cabinet are adorned with ponderous and useless objects and instruments: a hat, a pair of unmatched shoes, a model head, a stack of bricks and a pair of paintings depicting a two-headed hermaphrodite and a man with a head growing from his chest. In the bottom left corner, an open book explains that the elaborate machine below it is intended for resetting shoulders and certified by the Royal Academy of Paris. Hogarth's nationalistic antipathy for the French posits the machine as a telling object of ridicule. Through the meaningless assortment, Hogarth satirizes the wunderkammer's failed attempts at encyclopedic study. Rock's integrity as a medical professional is likewise questioned by rendering his collection senseless and hopelessly disjointed.

– DBS
Ancient Roman architecture inspired Piranesi’s topographical drafting, archeology, and fantastical scenes. In the literally decadent imagery of *Nero’s Tomb*, the imaginative collides with the archeological to produce an awe-inspiring print. This print, as the interface of the historical and the imaginary, correlates to the Enlightenment’s re-appraisal of what comprised truth. In pursuit of new approaches to history, Enlightenment thinkers searched the past to explain the formation and condition of contemporary Europe. Many turned to Greek and Roman antiquity often privileging one over the other. The “Greco-Roman debate” demonstrates the Enlightenment concern with historicism, which analyzed the source (or sources) of Western European culture. Philhellenists, chiefly of French and British nationality, argued that the genesis of culture began with Ancient Greece. Many Italian thinkers, not surprisingly, viewed Hellenocentrism (privileging the Greek) as gross simplification and contended that Latin culture was largely independent of Greek influence. Foremost among these Italian champions of Rome, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) probed the origin of Latin culture through language in order to show that Latin consisted of more Etruscan (Italian) terminology than Greek (Costelloe 2014).

In the tiny caption at bottom right of this print, Piranesi references the French Academy in Rome, perhaps aligning the modern French with the ancient Greek. His incorporation of grandiose flourishes and intricate organic forms certainly exemplifies the rococo style popular in France at the time. Moreover, to intensify what appears as his polemical assault on the grotesqueness of French art, Piranesi directly appropriates imagery from French printmakers in the decorative bas-relief visible at the foot of the sarcophagus. Indeed, a nearly identical figure appears in *Ewer with Hercules Slaying Cacus* by Jean LePautre, a 17th-century French printmaker (Sørenson 2005). Perhaps Piranesi places this borrowed figure in an overgrown and crumbling tomb in order to take sides in the emerging Greco-Roman controversy, a divisive nationalistic and aesthetic debate.

Piranesi reproduced not only a French image in his *Grotteschi*, but a French image of a Greco-Roman myth: Heracles’ (Hercules) defeat of Cacus, a fire-breathing ogre who lived at the future site of Rome on Palatine Hill. More relevant to this exhibition, the figures appear on the tomb of Nero, whom Pliny the Elder described as “an enemy of mankind.” Beyond the decrepit tomb, massive structures loom over the corrosion and fragments in the foreground. The sequence of arches supporting a causeway resembles the Roman aqueducts that Piranesi studied extensively. To Piranesi, and to many other historians both past and present, the functionality of Roman architecture far surpassed that of the decorative Greek. To this end, Piranesi asks, “Must the Genius of our artists be so basely enslaved to the Grecian manners, as not to dare to look to take what is beautiful elsewhere, if it be not of Grecian origin?” (Naginski 2008).

– TM
The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters

In the most famous image of Los Caprichos, a sleeping man in contemporary dress sits cradling his head at a desk inscribed with the phrase “El sueño de la razon produce monstruos.” The dreamer is Goya himself in the throes of Enlightenment-induced nightmares. This is reflected by the surrounding creatures and darkened hallucinations descending from the shadows. Goya directs the viewer’s eye from the bottom left to the top right of the print. The inscribed words represent the way “razon”, or reason, imposed on the creative artist’s mind, produces visions of “monstruos,” or monsters, which are embedded in dreams. An owl, perching on the tabletop to Goya’s left, attempts to rouse the dreamer with a burnisher, the artists’ tool used for erasing markings, gripped in his claws, as if he is urging the artist to erase the foulness of the Enlightenment from public conception.

Curling behind Goya’s back, a black cat glares mischievously, surrounded by menacing owls with their wings widespread: screeching and howling terrors. The artist’s self-insertion may lean toward anti-Enlightened thought, since he sides with more Baroque allegories of dreaming and the subconscious. Several scholars note that while it is difficult to ascribe specific iconographical meanings to Goya’s prints, especially the imagined creatures of Los Caprichos, there is symbolic significance in the monsters and animals Goya chooses. For example, the lynx at the bottom right corner of the print could refer to an emblem of fantasia or the “mental eye” (Levitine 1959). Goya’s iconographic allusion in addition to references to the Dream world, subverts the universalizing narrative imposed by the Enlightenment. Goya depicts particularity, individualism, and irrationality personified in the artist who is overwhelmed by his personal imagination.

Instead of observing or schematizing the natural world, Goya envisions the “nonrational possibilities of experience” (Ilie 1984). While past history cannot be experienced, the imagination can. Goya’s embodiment of a “split character” in his Self Portrait (1795–1800), similarly addresses duality, expressing that “Where there is light there is also darkness and where there is reason there is also madness” (Ciofalo 1997). Dualism is further realized through the understanding that a man cannot be fully “Enlightened” without becoming wholly aware of the conscious and unconscious (dream) worlds. The protagonist is in the midst of dreams that are a result of over-immersion in the ideology of the Enlightenment; his terrors may serve as a reflection of his absorption in “ideas and ideals that give little heed to reality” (Ciofalo 1997). In his depictions of the in-between state, Goya’s reality must be balanced by recognition of the subconscious, a dream world that is fantastically not of the rational world.

– MS